MANAGING MASS FATALITIES
A TOOLKIT FOR PLANNING

APC — Advanced Practice Centers — Advancing Public Health Preparedness Through Innovation

Public Health Department
Santa Clara Valley Health & Hospital System

THE COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA

Mass Fatality
Management Planning

Presenters

Mass Fatality Planning:
Why Medical Examiner/Coroner?

- The Medical Examiner/Coroner (ME/C) is the legal authority to conduct:
  - Victim Identification (or assist lead investigative agency, e.g., FBI when terrorism is suspected)
  - Determine the cause and manner of death
  - Manage death certification
  - Notification of next of kin

- Works closely with the vital records system and death care industry

Mass Fatality Planning:
Why Public Health?

- Public Health Leadership and first responder role

- Experience reaching out to community and community planning

- Partnership with Medical Examiner/Coroner
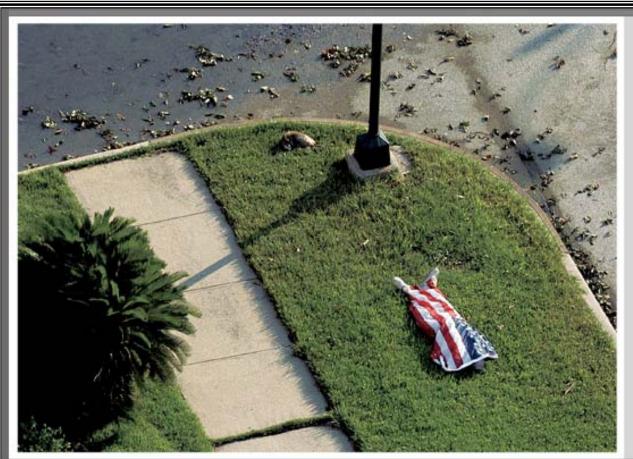
What is a Mass Fatality Incident?

Mass Fatality Incident

- Any situation where more deaths occur than can be handled by local ME/C resources

- Different for each community because communities vary in size and resources

- May be caused by natural hazards, human-related hazards and pro-active human hazards

Sunday, September 4, 2005

Death in America

A hurricane victim lays covered with an American flag in New Orleans

CHRIS USHER FOR TIME

TIME

Mass Fatality Events

- Challenging
- Overwhelming
  - Numbers
  - Sensations
  - Images
  - Sounds
  - Public Expectations

Photos: NOFD Photo Unit Katrina

Why mass fatality planning?

- The need to recognize and strengthen fatality management planning & response is critical if we are to be prepared for the possibility of incidents like recent U.S. mass fatalities as well as for a worst-case scenario pandemic influenza, a hazard from which no community is immune.

Key Aspects of
Mass Fatality Planning

- Command
- Decedent Operations:
    - Human Remains Recovery
    - Morgue Services
    - Family Assistance
    - Public Communications
    - Vital Records System
    - Death Care Industry
- Personnel/Volunteer Management
- Responder Support

Photo: NOFD Photo Unit Katrina

Command

- ## National Incident Management System (NIMS)
  - To ensure a comprehensive national framework designed to efficiently support incident management, regardless of the size, nature or complexity of the event

- ## Incident Command System (ICS)
  - To provide an interdisciplinary and flexible management system that is adaptable to an incident of any kind or size

Human Remains Recovery

- ME/C Office responsibility
- Investigation and evaluation of the incident site
- Search and recovery of victims
  - Photography and documentation
  - Property and evidence

Morgue Services

- ME/C Office responsibility
- Determines the cause of death
- Identifies victims
- Issues death certificates

Family Assistance Center

- One of the most sensitive operations in mass fatality management
- Purpose:
  - Provides a safe private place for families to grieve
  - Protects families
  - Facilitates exchange of information with ME/C Office to assist in identifying victims
  - Provides services to address family needs

Family Assistance Center

- ME/C Office responsibility
- ME/C roles:
  - Family briefings
  - Antemortem data collection
  - Death notifications

Family Assistance Center

- ME/C Office delegates management of family assistance center to another agency
- A range of services provided by local, state, and federal agencies as well as nonprofits and private organizations:
  - Spiritual care, mental health services, call center/hotline, child care, etc.

Public Communications

- Joint Information Center
  - To provide accurate, timely and consistent information that is coordinated across responding agencies
  - ME/C role: determines the sensitivity of information releases and how they affect the surviving families

Vital Records System

- Register death certificates
- Issue disposition permits
- ME/C role: mass fatality changes in standard operating procedures

Death Care Industry

- Files death certificate and obtains disposition permit
- Handles final disposition:
  - Removes deceased to mortuary
  - Prepares remains
  - Arranges for ceremony to honor deceased/address spiritual needs of family
  - Carries out final disposition

Personnel – Volunteer Management

- Manages the additional staff and volunteers that will be required for effective response by:
  - Assigning registered volunteers
  - Managing unregistered volunteers
  - Providing orientation for all volunteers
  - Providing Just-In-Time training for assigned functions

Personnel/Volunteer Management

- Key pre-registered volunteer organizations with extensive experience in mass fatality management:
  - DMORT
  - American Red Cross
  - Medical Reserve Corps

Responder Support

- The physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual demand placed upon mass fatality workers exceeds that of any event typically encountered in daily life and work

- Support for all responders is a critical component of mass fatality management

Other Local Agencies
Involved in Mass Fatality Management

- Law Enforcement
- Fire and Rescue/Hazmat
- Emergency Medical Services & Hospitals
- Public Health
- Mental Health
- Social Services
- Environmental Health
- Public Works/General Services Agency/Fleets and Facilities
- Office of Emergency Services

Logistics

- Facilities
- Transportation
  - Staff
  - Human Remains
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Communication & Information Systems
- Staff/Volunteer Processing Center

Community Recovery

- Perceptions of how well community leaders met the needs of surviving family members will have an enormous effect on individual and community recovery

City/County Planning Strategies

- Planning activities designed to target key stakeholders
- Face to Face Work Sessions
- Remote Collaborative Activities
- Multi-Disciplinary/Multi-Agency Working Groups
- Resource: *Managing a Mass Fatality: A Toolkit for Planning*

Mass Fatality Management Toolkit

- Identify and review existing plans
- Build on/expand as needed
- Use toolkit to guide planning
  - Extensive guidance based on recent mass fatalities & lessons learned
  - Operational tools provided

APC
Advanced Practice Centers

Toolkit Components

- Planning Context
- Concept of Operations
- Incident Notification & Plan Activation
- Command and Control
- Decedent Operations
  - Guidelines for all functions
  - Detailed Logistics Section
- Plan Maintenance

Toolkit Components (cont.)

- Information provided for:
  - Security
  - Mass Fatality Information Systems
  - Staff/Volunteer Processing Center
  - Family Concerns and Religious/Cultural Considerations
  - Infection and Other Health and Safety Threats
  - Pandemic Influenza Considerations

Planning Goal

- To ensure that our community is prepared to respond effectively in a mass fatality incident

Proposed Mass Fatality Management Plan Outline

- Introduction
- Purpose & Objectives
- Applicability & Scope
- Assumptions
- Authorities & References
- Concept of Operations
- Incident Notification & Plan Activation
- Command & Control

Proposed Mass Fatality Management Plan Outline (cont.)

- Human Remains Recovery
- Morgue Services
- Family Assistance
- Public Communications
- Vital Records System
- Death Care Industry
- Plan Maintenance

Proposed Mass Fatality Management Plan Outline (cont.)

- Appendices:
  - Security
  - Mass Fatality Information Systems
  - Staff/Volunteer Processing Center
  - Family Concerns and Religious/Cultural Considerations
  - Infection and Other Health and Safety Threats
  - Pandemic Influenza Considerations

Project Management and Facilitation

- ME/C Office Management Role

- Public Health Management Role

- Establish ground rules for planning process

- Define deliverables

Mass Fatality Planning

- Summary
- Questions
- Next Steps

Photo: NOFD Photo Unit Katrina